

The Biblical Pattern for Dealing with “Territorial” Strongholds

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There is much confusion today about dealing with strongholds, especially corporate or community ones. The purpose of this outline is to look at the biblical precedent for strongholds, study examples and make practical application for prayer. It must also be remembered that the same principles that apply for personal deliverance from strongholds are the same principles that apply to corporate ones.

Old Testament example: Elijah on Mt. Carmel (I Kings 18)

1. He did not rebuke the enemy (prophets of Baal) or try to “bind” them.
2. He came ON BEHALF OF THE PEOPLE.
3. Upon preparing the sacrifice, his humble prayers were out of obedience and addressed to the God of Covenant, not the enemy:

“At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: “O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.” (1 Kings 18:36-37)

4. After praying, the fire came and the people fell down in the fear of the Lord, acknowledging that the Lord was God.
5. AFTER this manifestation of God’s presence, Elijah told the people to get the prophets of Baal and kill them.
6. The stronghold was broken over the people because of:
 - Elijah’s obedience to the specific directives of the Lord
 - His willingness to be a servant first, a prophet second
 - The prayers of mercy on behalf of Elijah for the people
 - The fear of the Lord which fell on the people, thus empowering THEM to take out the enemy. Since it was a “corporate” stronghold, it was a “corporate” take-down!

New Testament pattern: Apostles

1. The focus of the apostles was consistently that of reaching people with the gospel.
2. They would confront INDIVIDUALS about the sin in their hearts, but they never addressed a principality. (They could have, given all the rebellion incited against them and the violence and persecution.)
3. They ministered in the reality that the only thing empowering the principalities were the individuals who agreed with them!

“It was about this time that King Herod arrested some who belonged to the church, intending to persecute them. He had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. When he saw that this met with approval among the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also. This happened during the Festival of Unleavened Bread.” (Acts 12:1-3)

4. Our focus is to preach the word of God with joy, rescuing individuals from the deception and lies. The more people that are reached and who turn from their "wicked ways", the less empowered the principalities will become.
5. How DID the Apostles Respond? First reaction to spiritual resistance (persecution) was to REJOICE!
 - a. (After being delivered from prison) *“Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” (Acts 4:29-30)*
 - b. *“They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.” (Acts 5:40-42)*
 - c. They didn't call a prayer meeting to rebuke the leaders, tear down the stronghold of unbelief or bind the Religious Leaders. They just kept on preaching the GOOD NEWS.
6. Their priority was TO EQUIP THE CHURCH
 - a. *“At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish synagogue. There they spoke so effectively that a great number of Jews and Greeks believed.” (Acts 14:1)*
 - b. *“While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. So, he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there.” (Acts 17:16-17)*
 - c. They knew that unless the church CHANGED THEIR MINDSETS, nothing would work long-term.
7. Philip addressing the stronghold of witchcraft over Samaria
 - a. *“Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, “This man is rightly called the Great Power of God.” They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his sorcery. But when they believed Philip as he proclaimed the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw. When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to Samaria. (Acts 8:9-24)*

- b. The HOLD of witchcraft over the city was broken because people got saved.
8. Paul addressing a sorcerer
- a. *“But Elymas the sorcerer (for that is what his name means) opposed them and tried to turn the proconsul from the faith. Then Saul, who was also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked straight at Elymas and said, “You are a child of the devil and an enemy of everything that is right! You are full of all kinds of deceit and trickery. Will you never stop perverting the right ways of the Lord? Now the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind for a time, not even able to see the light of the sun.” Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he groped about, seeking someone to lead him by the hand. (Acts 13:8-11)*
 - b. Paul was operating under a specific unction of the Holy Spirit, a prophetic mantle. The specific mention of Paul being “filled with” the Holy Spirit indicates an specific anointing and heaven-sent authority to rebuke Elymas.
 - c. The Lord may give Five-Fold ministers APOSTOLIC/PROPHETIC AUTHORITY to rebuke the enemy, at times. Discernment and wisdom is needed. This is not the rule for every believer! Proper spiritual authority must be in place, first.

Ways in which the Lord takes care of the Enemy (Strongholds)

1. **Through angelic help:** *“On the appointed day Herod, wearing his royal robes, sat on his throne and delivered a public address to the people. They shouted, “This is the voice of a god, not of a man.” Immediately, because Herod did not give praise to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died. But the word of God continued to spread and flourish.” (Acts 12:21-24)*
2. **Through worship:** *“About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose.” (Acts 16:25-27)*
3. **Through covenant agreement:** *“One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: “Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city.” Acts 18:9-10*
4. **Through the enemy’s self-destruction:** *“Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were (trying to cast out spirits in Jesus name). One day the evil spirit answered them, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?” Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding. When this became known to the Jews and Greeks living in Ephesus, they were all seized with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was held in high honor. (Acts 19:14-17)*
5. **Through non-believers:** (When Paul came to Ephesus) Demetrius, a stone worker and one whose craft made all the idols in the city, brought charges against the apostles. The city was in an uproar, ready to expel the disciples. It was a CITY CLERK who

quietly settled the argument and confusion with reason. (Acts 19:23-41)

These examples suggest the many ways to deal with principalities apart from rebuking them or “tearing them down”!

What is the Scriptural basis for “tearing down strongholds”?

1. *“I beg you that when I come I may not have to be as bold as I expect to be toward some people who think that we live by the standards of this world. For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete. (2 Cor 10:2-6)*
 - a. Paul had just commented on his “weak” personality. He’s saying that even though the world expects him (and other believers?) to be bold and outspoken, their fight is not in the flesh but in the spirit (even prayer closet?)
 - b. There is no mention of principalities or city-wide strongholds. The purpose of the verse was to highlight our spiritual battle as opposed to fighting with people as individuals.
 - c. His last statement is telling: Until the people are OBEDIENT, acts of DISOBEDIENCE CANNOT BE PUNISHED (again, in the context of strongholds). This suggests our lifestyles have a direct impact on the effectiveness of our prayers! Until we are living in obedience, we can’t be delivered.
2. *“Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.” (Ephesians 6:10-14)*
 - a. Paul acknowledges the battles we face originate from the enemy. His list alerts the believer to the various realms of darkness that may be impacting their lives.
 - b. Even though we are affected by principalities, our response is TO STAND.
 - c. We are to wear our spiritual armor, not to fight, but to STAND and resist.
3. The Lord says that HE will be the one to destroy strongholds:
 - a. (When the Lord delivers Jerusalem...) *“In that day,” declares the LORD, “I will destroy your horses from among you and demolish your chariots. I will destroy the cities of your land and tear down all your strongholds.” (Micah 5:10-11)*
 - b. *“I have cut off nations; their strongholds are demolished. I have left their streets deserted, with no one passing through. Their cities are destroyed; no one will be left no one at all. (Zephaniah 3:6)*
4. Tearing down strongholds is GOD’S JOB. Our job is to:
 - a. Put on the armor of God (know the Word of God and how to use it)
 - b. Resist the enemy’s schemes and temptations

- c. Stand strong against his attacks
 - d. This is for both individuals and cities.
5. Given Pauls' earlier admonition concerning the importance of OBEDIENCE, it is essential to have SOMETHING ELSE IN PLACE before trying to get delivered. (Notes on "Strong Man" below)
6. The disciples learned this pattern from THEIR MASTER!
- a. Instructions to his disciples when going to cities:
 - b. Look for the house of peace If not welcomed tell them WHO you represent and give warning:

Luke 10:5-12 (Matthew 10:11-14)

"When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you. (11 "Whatever town or village you enter, search for some worthy person there and stay at his house until you leave. 12 As you enter the home, give it your greeting. 13 If the home is deserving, let your peace rest on it; if it is not, let your peace return to you.)

Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house. When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.' But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, 'Even the dust of your town that sticks to our feet we wipe off against you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God is near.' I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town."

(Wikipedia) Jews often shook the dust from their feet to show their separation from Gentile practices. If the disciples shook the dust of a Jewish town from their feet, it would show their separation from Jews who rejected their Messiah. The gesture was to show the people that they were making a wrong choice.

This was a prophetic declaration/warning to the people, not an act of spiritual warfare.

7. Jesus denounced those towns that did not listen or believe in Him:

Matt 11:20-24

Then Jesus began to denounce the cities in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. 21 "Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22 But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. 23 And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths. If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. 24 But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you." NIV

- a. This was not binding of any territorial spirit but a rebuke for their rebellion.
 - b. For the disciples and Jesus, these rebukes came AFTER demonstrations and invitations to believe, were offered.
8. Jesus rebuked the leaders but loved the city.
- a. (Jesus, after rebuking the Pharisees and Teachers of the Law...) *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"* (Matthew 23:37-39)
9. Jesus had just finished rebuking the Pharisees and teachers of the law, calling them a brood of vipers and snakes! He held the individual teachers and leaders of the synagogue responsible for the condition of the "church". Yet, when He spoke to the CITY (at large), He spoke with compassion.

Jesus demonstrated the very principle that it's the PEOPLE who empower the strongholds, thus setting the example for the disciples.

Binding and Loosing:

1. Key Scriptures -

(Context is the revelation of Jesus and the Church being given keys)

"Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 16:17-20)

- a. Peter represented the Church which will be given authority over the enemy.
- b. The focus here is on God-given authority to defeat the enemy, not a prayer formula.

(Cross reference is Isaiah 22:22 when God is rebuking Shebna, the ungodly steward of the temple)

"In that day I will summon my servant, Eliakim son of Hilkiah. I will clothe him with your robe and fasten your sash around him and hand your authority over to him. He will be a father to those who live in Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David; what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. I will drive him like a peg into a firm place; he will be a seat of honor for the house of his father. All the glory of his family will hang on him."

- c. The context is that of taking authority from someone who is not qualified, and giving it

someone with the authority of heaven.

d. Again, the principle is that of recognizing TRUE GODLY authority which bears fruit

2. Purpose of Binding –

Matt 18:15-20

"If your brother sins against you go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. "I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be ("will have been") bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be ("will have been") loosed in heaven." Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."

- a. The admonition to bind and loose is right in between verses about the unity of believers. The context is to show the power of agreement.
- b. The Scripture is talking about a rebellious believer who refuses to listen to the gathered Church, even after appealing to them privately. It is at THIS point that believers can BIND the influence of this rebellious believer from infecting the larger Church.
- c. Jesus repeats the admonition by highlighting the power of agreement among covenant believers.

The point of the “binding and loosing” Scriptures is to distinguish God-given authority from mans. Only God’s authority has real power to change things AND we can only have authority when we are in right relationship with others. This is not about engaging in spiritual warfare.

Binding the Strong Man

1. *“But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or how can anyone enter the strong man's house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house. He who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters.” (Matthew 12:25-30)*
 - a. Jesus’ point was that Satan can’t cast out Satan. Jesus is the One who will come and bind up the Strong Man and release all who have been in bondage to him.
 - b. Since the parable mentions a house, it is possible to consider a congregation (House) or even city as a type of House which the enemy can take captive. In order to “take back” what the enemy has taken, we need to bind the Strong man.

The ultimate goal in deliverance is not to just “bind” but to “expel”, “cast out”, “remove from power”! We don’t want to the enemy to just be quiet and wait around. We want him gone!

There are times during deliverance that an individual is not fully prepared or strong enough to

maintain their deliverance. Until they walk in truth and obedience to God's Word, it is premature to cast out the demonic spirit. The same holds true for a corporate stronghold. To walk in long-term freedom, it requires a change of thinking and unhealthy patterns from the past. Until such time when an individual or group can walk on their own, there is a time to "bind" the enemy from causing confusion or stirring up trouble. However, this is only temporary until full deliverance can happen.

So, what is our response? (At COMMUNITY LEVEL)

1. Determine to walk with clean hands and a pure heart to have God's authority.
2. Walk in agreement with one another, free from offense and past hurts.
3. Focus on the people caught in sin, not on the stronghold.
4. Stand firm on the Word of God when feeling attacked.
5. Discern the time and readiness for deliverance.
6. Pray for boldness to speak and declare the truth.
7. Bring any "threats" or accusations before the Lord and ask Him to take care of it.